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Wildcat winners
The Senior Girls volleyball team from Archie Stouffer hosted a tournament this past week in Minden. Teams from around the school board were present. /TIM YANO staff phtographer

Override and divide; Minden council approves 2026 budget

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

"This is a historic meeting," opened Minden Mayor Bob Carter during the special meeting of council last Thursday, Jan. 29. "In that this is the finalization of our budget process under the new laws."

The meeting was called for the date, as it falls at the deadline for council to counter the vetoes made by Carter earlier this year. With over 25 amendments put in place towards the proposed budget, using his Strong Mayor Powers, Carter selected eight that he felt were not in the best interest of Minden Hills staff and regional constituents.

"Votes that we take today affect our constituents and the future of the township of Minden Hills," Carter said as he opened the floor for council members to share their thoughts.

see FORMER page 12

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A rendering of the proposed Outdoor Education and Indigenous Centre, presented by TLDSB. /submitted

Outdoor Education and Indigenous Centre coming to Minden

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

By spring, 2027, there will be a new option for educating local students in the Haliburton Highlands.

Last Friday evening, Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) sent out a press release, informing parents of an initiative for a new Outdoor Education and Indigenous Centre, located in Minden. Approved by the Ministry of Education, the 90 acre, 3000-square foot facility will be dedicated to alternative learning for students between Kindergarten and Grade 12.

"By utilizing the area's natural environment as an enriching learning space, TLDSB is looking forward to providing a new location for learning opportunities and will be seeking support from local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders," said TLDSB director of education, Wes Hahn.

The press release stated that the programming offered at the centre will be directly aligned with the Ontario Curriculum, including but not limited to:

- Leadership and teambuilding
- Environmental learning (orienteering, mapping, flora/fauna identification, and ecology)
- Physical education (skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking)
- Indigenous learning (teachings from Elders and Knowledge Keepers)
- Unique regional activities (collecting maple sap, studying animal tracks, and exploring the Canadian shield)

"We look forward to engaging students in land-based learning rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and using the land as a teacher to provide holistic, experiential education," read the press release. It was noted that the project is a direct response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Member of Provincial Parliament for the region, Laurie Scott, echoed the sentiment around the value of the future facility. "The Outdoor Education and Indigenous Centre in Minden is a meaningful investment in our students and our community," she said. "This new centre will give students the opportunity to connect with nature, learn beyond the classroom, and develop exciting hands-on skills that will benefit them for years to come. This new centre is a strong investment into the future of Minden and those who call it home."

While the exact location and details around the site are not yet confirmed, a palpable buzz around the facility has started circulating on social media, with parents and teachers sharing the information widely, and interest snowballing as the idea has been shared with readers.

Kelsey Sharpless has one child in Junior Kindergarten, and a one-year-old who will be attending Stuart Baker when he is older. She noted that she is excited to see the centre being built so close to home. "My hope will be that our local students get to visit often," she said. "I think a lot of information is coming out in recent years on the importance of outdoor education. I also feel strongly that Indigenous learning is so important to integrate from an early age so our kids grow up valuing and understanding Canada's Indigenous history."

This is a developing story. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Accessibility Awards launched to highlight community wins

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Do you know someone who goes above and beyond to make Haliburton County accessible and enjoyable for all? Now is your time to celebrate them.

For the first time ever at a local level, the County of Haliburton's Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee has launched the official Accessibility Awards. With four categories taken into consideration: community member, community organization, community business, and community youth (aged 25 and under), the awards aim to highlight the efforts made by members of the community to offer access and inclusivity for all.

Sue Tiffin, the director of community outreach for the County, credits the advisory committee with making these awards a reality. "This is something they've been passionate about for a long time," she explained. "We wanted to highlight some accessible features in each community."

She noted it is the committee's goal to recognize Accessibility Champions, with a focus on accessibility and universal design within the community. She hopes it will encourage more residents, organizations, and businesses to actively participate in making the county more accessible for all residents.

"There are many ways in which people, organizations and businesses can contribute as Accessibility Champions, to support people with disabilities in being able to participate fully in our community," said Tiffin, "and we are looking forward to being able to celebrate every way in which barriers have been acknowledged and removed, and all people have been welcomed and invited in."

Based on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the County is held accountable for ensuring accessibility is standardized and aligned with each new development and build. Staff are also backtracking, and adding accessible features to former builds, allowing for all members of the public to access these points.

"Sometimes people don't realize when something isn't accessible," explained Tiffin. "Accessibility can mean many different things, and it's not a one size fits all for everyone."

While the default thought for creating access to a site is often a ramp, Tiffin confirmed that a ramp may help some, but there are many other considerations to be made around ensuring a space is accessible for all. "It might be a sensory need, or different ways they can hear," she said. "Accessibility goes beyond ramps. And there are AODA guidelines, but how can we go even beyond those legal requirements to make things accessible."

With the newly-launched awards, Tiffin hopes to foster conversations around what accessibility means for everyone. "I hope we receive a lot of nominations," she said. "I hope it makes people think about accessibility in the community."

To nominate an individual, organization, or business for the County Accessibility Awards, visit www.haliburtoncounty.ca/AccessibilityAwards. In order to ensure everyone has access to the awards information, Tiffin also noted that forms can be picked up at the County of Haliburton offices, located at 11 Newcastle Street in Minden. "I want us to continue working on making our communities accessible for everyone," said Tiffin. "It's a responsibility we all have."

CFN hits winter slump, despite increased need

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

While this Christmas season is now in the rear view mirror, the need for community support still stays at an all-time high. "It's really heartbreaking," said Tina Jackson, the executive director for the Central Food Network (CFN). "This is not how we as a society want our people to live."

According to the local health unit, over 18.2 per cent of households in the region are food insecure. The CFN runs the Highlands East Food Hub, the Cardiff Food Bank, as well as community cooks and food rescue programs.

Through these services, the CFN provides food for all of Highlands East, eastern Dysart and Paudash, including Gooderham, Wilberforce, Harcourt, Cardiff, Tory Hill, and Highland Grove. This equates to an average of 120 families per month. "We are currently feeding over 240 people every month," confirmed Jackson, "we expect that to exceed 260 by year-end."

Beyond food services, the CFN also navigates needs around a heat bank, offering firewood and grants to those in need, and providing information, referrals, and advocacy around access to heating and cooling.

Jackson explained that they see a real bump in community interest around supporting the initiatives over the holidays. "We live in a really special community where people take care of one another," she said. "But there is a corresponding need that continues to increase."

> ***"We're really questioning how we're going to keep up with the resources we have ..."***
>
> — Tina Jackson, Central Food Network

Last year, at this same time, Jackson saw what she and her team believed to be "an anomaly" in the numbers for those reaching out in need. "But that pace has pretty much continued," she noted, with an average of 50 calls over the course of January. "We're really questioning how we're going to keep up with the resources we have."

When asked about the reasoning behind increased need, Jackson credits it to a multitude of factors. "We need fairer wealth distribution," she said. "We need living wages, we need disability support, we need better support for people in between jobs."

Out of the many individuals that the CFN supports, 38 per cent are adults, 26 per cent are seniors, and 33 per cent are children and youth, with three per cent remaining in the 'unknown' category. "Not only are more people needing food assistance," clarified Jackson, "but people are needing food assistance more frequently."

With a very small but mighty staff, Jackson worries that the increased community need is going to put a damper on the momentum and capacity of the CFN. "We are absolutely experiencing burnout," she said. "But we are trying to look at things through a campaign perspective, looking at something as a completed project. But it is scary, it is frustrating."

Jackson credits much of the success around the CFN to the dedicated group of volunteers. "We could not do what we do without them," she said. "They go above and beyond every single day."

In an effort to keep the organization going, Jackson is seeking additional volunteers, as well as community support in the form of monthly donations or fundraising. "I cannot underscore how grateful we are for every donation," said Jackson. "But hunger doesn't slow down."

For more information on the Central Food Network and their impact on the community, visit www.centralfoodnetwork.org.

OPP continuing motorized snow vehicle training throughout February

Central Region Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers will be conducting Motorized Snow Vehicle (MSV) training, which has been underway throughout January and will continue into February.

Residents in the Bracebridge, Huntsville and Haliburton areas may notice an increased police presence on local trails and surrounding areas as officers take part in scheduled MSV training. These exercises are part of the OPP's annual effort to ensure officers are prepared to patrol safely and effectively during the winter season.

Training will involve operational snowmobile handling, trail patrol techniques and scenario based exercises. All activities are planned with public safety in mind, and no disruptions to local trail systems are expected.

Snowmobilers are reminded to use caution when encountering police training in progress and to always ride according to trail conditions, posted signage and applicable laws.

The OPP appreciates the public's cooperation as officers complete this MSV training program.

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- **Road Resurfacing**
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Our Sleeping in Cars event does more than raise funds for Places for People — it shines a light on a critical issue: the need for safe, appropriate housing for everyone in our community.

Affordable housing isn't just a statistic—it's the people you see every day: the cashier scanning your groceries, the hairstylist cutting your hair, the server bringing your meal. Many of these hardworking community members struggle to find housing they can afford.

Too many people in our county are homeless or hidden in "invisible" situations—couch surfing, living in unsafe or overcrowded conditions, or even sleeping in their cars.

For more information

Friday, March 27, 2026

Join us, donate, or volunteer to help ensure everyone in our community has a safe place to call home. Your support makes a real difference.

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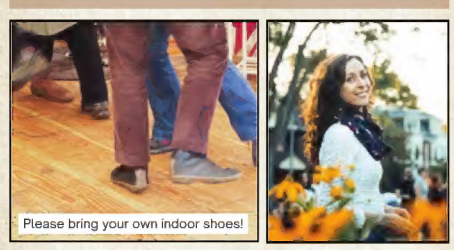
Saturday, Feb 7, 2026
7:00 PM at the Haliburton Legion



All ages and abilities are welcome—no experience required. Featuring square dance caller Hannah Shira Naiman, with live bluegrass music by Nathan Smith, Kyle Kirkpatrick, and Tim O'Reilly, plus a special performance by the Haliburton Scottish Country Dancers.

Tickets: $20 for adults; $10 for college students; free for children and high school students. Available at dancehappenshere.com and Redmans Records.

Scan for tickets!

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A capture of the local northern lights, provided by Dana McMullen.

Chasing the northern lights

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

It's the middle of the night, and while most people are tucked in their warm beds and counting sheep, a lone figure is standing on a frozen lake in Haliburton Highlands, in the biting cold, waiting for a light show.

For most, this would be a moment of isolation. For renowned professional photographer Dana McMullen, it's the ultimate connection.

"It's the thrill of the chase," McMullen explained in a recent telephone interview. "You're out there trying to capture something unique, yes, but more than that, you're trying to show the world how beautiful and intriguing this planet really is."

The Eagle Lake resident has spent the last five years chasing the aurora borealis since moving back home from the U.S. Southwest, where he lived for about a decade.

"So, I was shooting the Milky Way because we lived in a lot of dark sky areas, Joshua National Park, you know, Flagstaff, Arizona, where we lived for a few years," he recalled. "It's a dark sky city."

The photographer explained that chasing the lights is a game of patience. While much is made of the astonishing colours captured by high-end cameras, the experience of being there is defined by what you can't see in a still image: the silence and the scale.

"There's a silence out there that's hard to describe," he explained. "I've been out on the lake all alone, screaming at the top of my lungs because I can't believe what I'm seeing, and then I have to tell myself, 'Hey, don't wake the neighbours.'"

There have been reports that during the peak of a strong light show of the auroras making sounds like crackling or hissing, or what some have described as distant thunder.

"My cousin in northern Alberta has described it to me," McMullen admitted. "But I've never heard it. For me, it's the absolute stillness that makes it feel real."

The Haliburton Highlands has been treated to a handful of light shows as of late, thanks to solar storms caused by powerful eruptions on the Sun. These storms are caused by flares of energy travelling from the Sun's surface into space. If our planet happens to be in the path of these flares, the energy interacts with Earth's magnetic field, creating beautiful displays of the northern lights.

The photographer explained that chasing the northern lights often leads to unexpected human moments. During one summer display, McMullen was hunkered down along a shoreline when he overheard a young woman on a nearby dock. She was on her phone, "spilling her beans" to a friend about her life and how messy it had become, he recalled. She was so consumed by her personal drama that she hadn't looked up.

"When she hung up, she didn't know I was there," he said. "I asked her, 'Are you watching this?' and she just said, 'What the hell is happening?'"

That's when her focus shifted from her phone to the sky, watching an aurora erupt into pillars of light.

"I showed her how to use her phone to capture it. It was an interesting evening, watching someone realize what was right above them the whole time."

However, to chase these special moments, one must escape the "orange dome" of city lights and light pollution. But even in Haliburton County, the sanctuary of the dark is under threat. The photographer had lived in a city where streetlights were strictly regulated to point downward and found that even in Eagle Lake, the light pollution can be very frustrating.

"People come up from the city and they light up every single tree on their property. Across the lake, someone has a giant white spotlight that just blares across the water," McMullen said. "They don't take the time to look up and see what's above them. If they just turned those lights off by 8 p.m., they could enjoy the stars themselves."

Despite some light pollution, the photographer has captured stunning images of the northern lights over the County, and recalled a special night spent with his son, who had never seen them before, chasing the light show.

"We were hunkered in, facing north for six hours," he explained. "It wasn't until we walked back to the car that we realized it was everywhere. As we drove back, we were stopping every few minutes just going, 'Oh my God.' It was spinning overhead."

But not every night turns into a light show. And for those who chase them, disappointment is part of the contract. When the lights do make an appearance, it's a gentle reminder that the Sun is a living thing, and sometimes it's important to take some time outside and take a look up into the night's sky.

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Dysart council denies $38K in fee relief for new art centre project

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

In a move that may impact the timeline for the proposed new art facility, the Municipality of Dysart et al council denied a request from the Haliburton Highlands Arts Centre Foundation (HHACF) for relief from nearly $38,000 in planning and development fees.

The request was denied during last week's regular council meeting, where HHACF director and Daniel Manley and board member Drew Allen presented a detailed proposal requesting the municipality waive approximately $16,325 in municipal fees and provide a "Waiver in Principle" for another $21,500 in professional and legal deposits.

"The foundation is at a pivotal moment," Manley wrote in the proposal that was previously sent to council ahead of the meeting. "The funds we raise today are earmarked for the specialized talent required to design a facility that meets the needs of our community."

The HHACF said these funds were critical for the "predevelopment" phase of the project off of Wonderland Road and are specifically for hiring a project manager and "securing the design and architectural expertise necessary to move this project from vision to construction documents."

"Redirecting nearly $38,000 toward administrative and external consulting fees would significantly hinder our ability to move forward," Manley said in the proposal.

The foundation finalized the deal in October after purchasing the 14-and-a-half-acre property from the municipality for $1. The land was donated by the township, with the stipulation that the not-for-profit organization would have 30 months to navigate planning approvals, with the build required within five years from the purchase date.

The foundation noted during a public open house in October that the proposed centre has $30 millon price tag.

The HHACF categorized the requested relief into two primary areas. The first category involved internal municipal application fees totalling $16,325, which includes $5,000 for a major Official Plan Amendment, $1,750 for a Zoning By-law Amendment, and $750 for the removal of a holding provision. This group also accounts for Site Plan Approval costs, including a $2,000 base fee, an estimated $6,075 additional fee, and a $750 responsibility agreement fee.

The second category consists of $21,500 in professional and legal deposits required to offset third-party costs across two project phases. These external costs include $10,000 for peer review deposits, $5,000 for professional services deposits, and $1,500 for legal fees deposits, alongside a $5,000 OPA professional assistance deposit.

"I just wanted to say to council, we are incredibly grateful for this donation of this piece of land … and it has got our supporters and our donors very, very, excited, Murray," Allen said after presenting to council. "It couldn't have happened at a better time, and we are very confident that within the next five years we will break ground."

Before deciding on the request, Mayor Murray Fearrey said he wanted to speak with the treasurer.

"We'll talk to them today, we'll get back to it later in the day," the mayor said.

Planning Director Jeff Iles noted that while he provided two specific resolutions, one for approval and one for denial, council also had the option to simply receive the comments and wait for further financial clarification from the treasurer.

It wasn't until after the scheduled closed session of council that the formal resolution was read into the record, denying the foundation's request for relief from planning application fees and charges.

Dukes in Dysart

The band Union Duke came to Haliburton this past weekend, to rock out with a full crowd at the Haliburton Legion. The lively show played tunes from the band's newest album, and had many grooving along with the energy of the songs. The show was opened by local musician, Thom Lambert. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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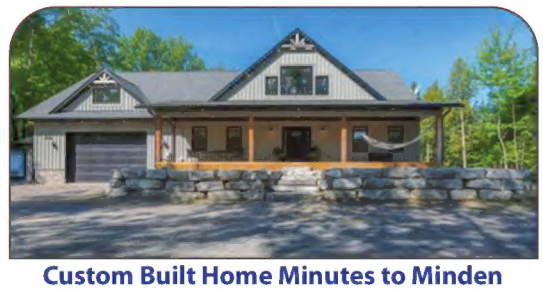

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Burnout

Editorial

Emily Stonehouse

WE'VE ALL seen fires sizzle and sputter as their last sparks cool. That audible experience of the roar of a fire, gasping for its last licks of heat.

So when people say they are experiencing burnout, deep down, in our very cores of evolved beings, we all know exactly what that means.

It means that they're done. They've run out of fuel. That the vibrancy and warmth that once kept them aflame has dwindled. Their spark has sizzled.

It's a word I'm hearing more and more, as it can be attached to any space where human emotion is invested. You have to truly care about something to feel burnt out from it. You have to pour your soul into the pit to feel the flames.

Tina Jackson, the executive director of the Central Food Network, used the phrase with me last week. While they rely heavily on the many volunteers that make their organization tick, there are a small handful of dedicated staff.

And they're tired. So tired.

Because in a career like that, there's no winning. It's not like once a job is completed, they can all go home.

The need is never-ending. And if anything, it's steadily increasing each and every day.

So how do you measure success if you are constantly navigating governmental systems that aren't prioritizing people, while requests are flooding the phone lines?

You get burnt out. One step forward, a million steps back.

We are seeing burnout online at a rapid pace. We aren't designed as a species to absorb news as a steady stream. Just this week, I watched as an innocent man was murdered by 'government' officials. I had to watch it a few times before my body connected with my brain, and I realized I was watching a life end. A real life. One which had been dedicated to helping others, through every step of his journey.

And yet I watched without emotion. Once. Twice. I'm not sure if I was overwhelmed by the constant barrage of bad news, or if the shocking brutality of what I was watching seemed far beyond the grasps of anything that could be reality, but I was numb. A true and unwavering sign of complete and utter burnout.

It's a dangerous place we've gotten to, as a society. A lack of empathy from others, an inability to continue from those who have poured their soul into the flames.

So how do we pivot? How do we loosen the shackles of burnout and make every effort to reignite the flame?

It starts with asking for help. Taking a break, stepping away, shutting down our minds and our bodies, and activating a system reset when possible. We all need a pause. We're not designed to burn forever.

And then we start again. We link with like-minded individuals, we share goals, we share dreams, we share hopes. We recognize that the light burns in those around us, and we make every effort to keep that flame alive.

Because we are nothing if we are scattered amongst the ashes, another story burnt too soon.

But together, with our souls poured into the pit, we can reignite the spark.

Unhinged

Poke, Peel

Pair, Ponder

Fay Martin

THERE SEEMS to be a growing – I will say belated – consensus that the Orange Agent to our south has become unhinged, i.e. disconnected from reality. This has kicked off a flurry of flapping about the inability of the usual 'guardrails' (in the asylum they're called attendants) to constrain him. Where oh where do we store the straitjackets?

I burst my buttons with Canadian pride when our prime minister addressed the elite of the world in Davos with a plan to get us out of this global mess. Basically he said the world had irrevocably changed and we needed to think about it differently.

Dan Yashinsky, a guy who uses stories to shift our world view, referred to 'frame-lock' in a Jan. 17/26 *Toronto Star* article, and recommended, as Prime Minister Carney did, that we begin to imagine a new story – in this case, I'm going to say, about how democracy works.

The current story is that educated citizens elect representatives whose platform (i.e. story about what they will do as elected officials) best represents their interests. Of the many aspects of that story that are clearly fictional, if not delusional, I will focus on the aspect of education.

Education is not about going to school. Or about knowing 'facts'. Or about being able to read and write.

It is about being able "to hold complex ideas in mind, weigh evidence and live with uncertainty." (with thanks to Rick Lash's article in the same *Toronto Star* edition – and no, I'm not on the *Star's* payroll, although I am appreciative that they continue to publish a real paper and have occasionally published my op-ed pieces.)

And what is most likely to develop the above-mentioned skills? Lash says reading. And cites scientific evidence about how reading patterns the mind to "fuse vision and language into a single circuit for understanding."

But not just any reading: 'deep reading'. The kind of exposure to words that requires the mind to engage with what they mean. The kind of reading that doesn't tell you what to think but beguiles and challenges and requires you to do the thinking. (Ironically, precisely the kind of thing that AI promises it can do for you – oh wait, maybe that 'gift' is not ironic but terrifying – a rant for another day).

Deep reading is best nurtured by the printed word, optimally with tactile engagement. In other words, a paper book. I'm not just selling what readers know is a love object for me, (my house aboundeth with books, and I'm prepping to sell one I wrote) but sharing a statement that has empirical as well as anecdotal support. But hey, I believe that the plasticity of the brain can adapt to taking in meaningful material from e-books and audio books – I'm not there yet, and you can see me struggling with frame-lock.

But what does reading books have to do with democracy? Because reading books develops the hardware (brain patterns) and software (skills) to do the kind of thinking that is required to imagine and implement an alternative to our current practice, to help us escape from frame-lock (which, hmm, might be another word for straitjacket).

That takes me to Hannah Arendt, a German Jew who escaped WW2 and lived to write books (which I will admit I have only read about, not read) about how the circumstances that gave Hitler and Stalin legitimized control could be avoided.

Her recipe? 'Collective deliberation by active thinkers, not passive consumers'. (with thanks to Jennifer Szalai, *NYT Book Review*, Jan. 17/26). Which is pretty much what Carney is saying Canadians, domestically, and the democratic world, globally, needs to do, starting asap.

What does that mean to you, on the day that you read this column? It means checking yourself every time you say 'the government should…'. Because, as a literate, educated, concerned citizen, you ARE the government. Or need to be, else others who are none of the above will be.

So how to act as if you are the government? The ingredient list in Arendt's recipe is collectivity, activity, thinking. Maybe best added to the mixing bowl in reverse.

First you think about what the problem is and what the solution to it would look like. Don't get stuck in what the problem is, but rather what good would look like. Escape frame-lock.

Second, you decide what you can do to achieve the good you imagine (Lash's 'vision'). Not the roving finger of assigned guilt, not the coulda-shoulda-woulda of procrastination, but what YOU can do in the current reality.

Third, engage others in a collective think (Lash's 'language') to come to agreement (not necessarily consensus; there'll be tweak-time later), about what good looks like and what collaborative agency you have to make it happen. Small steps, which is how the little dog got to Dover, if you recall the childhood rhyme.

And lo, the gate hinge is reconnected to the post and begins to swing freely.

points of view

How to survive an earthquake

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

I SUSPECT we were all a little shook up by the earthquake that affected our area last week, but I can't say that with any degree of certainty.

You see, I slept through the whole darn thing. And I will always do so, until they start making earthquakes occur at a more reasonable hour.

Luckily, sleeping through something does not mean you are not qualified to provide a strong opinion. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to speak about the subjects I learned in every class I ever attended.

Which leads me to this column.

Much has been written about how to survive an earthquake. Most experts suggest you drop to the ground, cover your head, and hold onto something solid until the shaking stops. In the lead up to the earthquake, you are supposed to secure all the heavy and precariously positioned items in your home so they won't fall – unless it's a piece of art that your sister bought you that you secretly dislike.

These experts also advise you to prepare a go-bag and disaster kit, in case it gets bad, and to maintain a way to stay informed for updates and direction from emergency responders.

Or you can just sleep through it.

Though this approach is not talked about much, sleeping through an earthquake is a perfectly valid survival technique. It was successfully used by thousands of people during this last one.

In a way, this is similar to dropping to the ground and holding onto something, but far more comfortable. Heck, if you sleep like I do, your head is probably covered by a pillow already. Sleeping through an earthquake prevents you from hurting your back too, as you might, if you were trying to secure heavy things like fridges and bookshelves from toppling over.

Then there is this: when you are in the act of sleeping through an earthquake, should you be roused by the shaking, you just naturally assume that dinner isn't sitting well with your spouse, which again, leads you to covering your head with a pillow. So, it's a win-win.

There are other advantages to this technique too.

For one thing, instead of panicking that the worst is going to happen during the earthquake, you wake up in the morning, learn about it, and then walk to that atrocious piece of "art" your sister gave you – and find out that the worst did happen. It's still on the wall in one piece.

The good news is, here's the time to place it in an even more precarious setting, so when the next quake happens, things won't be so bad.

Of course, there is never an up side to an earthquake – even one so mild as the one we just slept through. For instance, when Jenn woke me up to tell me about the earthquake that happened while I was sleeping, she also announced that almost all the wonderful art I had bought her over the last few years had fallen to the floor and was destroyed.

The good news is I'm going to be in the vicinity of the dollar store where I bought them next week, so I will be able to surprise her with replacements – plus a few more originals.

In any case, sleeping through our most recent earthquake left me feeling like a James Bond martini.

I was shaken, but not stirred.

pic *of the* **past**

Jack Robertson had this house built overlooking Head Lake in 1936. This photo was taken the next year. Jack planted potatoes in the first year where the lawn would go. Notice the car and the outhouse. Joe Roberts lived in the house across the road. /submitted by Jacqueline Metcalf

Connection, creativity, and community

Green meadow

Tales from the great

Lynda Shadbolt

IN TIMES when the world feels heavy, music has a remarkable way of lifting us up. It reaches places words alone cannot always touch. Music can calm us, energize us, and remind us that we are not alone. It brings people together in ways that can't always be explained, but can always be felt. In moments of uncertainty or worry, music offers comfort, connection, and hope.

Winter can be a particularly challenging season. The days are short, the nights are long, and the cold can feel endless. Yet winter also invites us to slow down, gather together, and find warmth in shared experiences. This is where music shines brightest. Live music creates joy and delight, builds community, and gives us something positive to look forward to - especially when we need it most.

One such moment happened on a cold Saturday evening under a bright, nearly full moon. Though the air outside was bitter, inside the Haliburton Legion it was warm, cozy, and buzzing with energy. Union Duke, a five-piece all-male band, filled the room with a rich, energizing sound. Their music wrapped around the crowd like a blanket, warming spirits and inviting movement. People danced in their chairs, tapped their feet, and took to the floor, smiling and laughing together.

It was one of those nights where the worries of the world faded, replaced by rhythm, harmony, and shared joy. Opening the evening was local musician Thom Lambert, who performed beautiful original songs centred on being a light in the darkness. His heartfelt lyrics and kind presence set a kind and warm tone for the night, reminding everyone that even in difficult times, there is always something good to hold onto.

Events like this do not happen by accident. They are made possible by dedicated volunteers in our county who continue to bring exceptional music to the Highlands while also shining a spotlight on local talent. We are truly fortunate to live in a community that values the arts and understands the power of music to bring people together. The February Folk Festival is a perfect example of this spirit. Running from February 1 to 28, 2026, the festival is a month-long celebration of live music, community, and winter warmth throughout the Haliburton Highlands. Hosted by the Haliburton County Folk Society, the festival features performances across a wide range of genres - from folk and acoustic to pop, blues, rock, and even opera - in lovely local venues such as the Haliburton Legion, Dominion Hotel, Minden Curling Club, Brooksong Retreat Centre, and more. With weekly live performances, open jam nights, songwriter circles, winter square dancing, pop-up shows, and family-friendly events, the February Folk Festival offers something for everyone.

With both free and ticketed events, it makes live music accessible to all. In a world filled with challenges, music reminds us of who we are and what truly matters: connection, creativity, and community. This February, let's gather, listen, and feel the warmth that music brings - together. For more information check out haliburtonfolk.com.

letters to the editor

Opportunities for Minden Hills

To the Editor,

Minden Hills is at a very promising time of evaluation, especially with current provincial mandates. Today, we saw how mayoral or "King's" powers don't always work in a truly democratic society - kudos to the council members who stopped the waiting game.

There is so much opportunity here, and a wealth of knowledge already in the community. Planners, engineers, architects, and volunteers can help facilitate ideas. We don't always need consultants - residents, schools, churches, and local groups often have great ideas if we give them a voice. Seasonal residents should also be included!

For example, I've been part of this area for a long time - I watched my first *Star Wars* movie at the Beaver Theatre, known now as The Pigeon's Den. Some council members today showed a real opportunity: addressing the eyesore of the old fire hall. Imagine replacing it with a stage and undercover area to encourage people to come into town - see performers, sing along, enjoy farmers markets, or stop for lunch with snowmobiles parked nearby. The possibilities are endless!

There is so much opportunity here, and a wealth of knowledge already in the community. Planners, engineers, architects, and volunteers can help facilitate ideas. We don't always need consultants - residents, schools, churches, and local groups often have great ideas if we give them a voice. Seasonal residents should also be included!

It takes creative councillors who understand budgets, community engagement, and how to involve residents in the process. Let's go, Minden Hills - let's make this happen! Slate that vote and share your ideas with the community.

Make sure you are on the voters list! As long as you live in the area or hold property, you can vote and run for council. Snowbirds, cottagers, and renters are all included in this election. So you can be a snowbird and run for council.

A few reminders from my experience: I serve on the HHHS Advisory, spoke at a County Council meeting yesterday (virtual), and attended today's council meeting (also virtual). HHHS meetings will continue in hybrid format and I will attend one today. While I won't be running for council this time, we do need change - no one should become Mayor or councillor by acclamation.

Check your voter status here: elections@mindenhills.ca

Joy Webster,
Minden

Thanks to 'Good Samaritans'

To the Editor,

Sunday we were driving on Eagle Lake Rd when an ambulance was rushing towards us to an emergency with lights and siren going. We moved to the right to give it space and we slipped off the road into a snowbank and got really stuck. Lucky for us a car behind us stopped and using a heavy tow strap which luckily he had, he pulled us out.

A serious "Thank You" to Kieran O'Byrne and the others for stopping to help us.

We were very lucky to have such 'Great Haliburton' people stop to help us.

Thank you all !

Jim and Marilyn Frost,
Haliburton

Fay Martin to present at Community Coffee House

Well-known local resident Fay Martin will be the presenter at the February Community Coffee House taking place on Monday, February 9 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Schofield Room of the Haliburton Legion, at 719 Mountain St., Haliburton.

Fay is well-known in the community as the founder of Places for People, a columnist for the *Minden Times* and *Haliburton Echo*, and community activist and supporter, as well as for her earlier career in the social work field. On this occasion, she will share her experience as a spouse turned caregiver for her late husband when his dementia reshaped their lives. Giving us a close look into the love, loss and exhaustion of caregiving for someone close, Fay will also talk about the on-going quest of a caregiver to remain, at the same time, a person with ongoing identity and agency. Fay will also talk about her forthcoming book *Dementia Widow: A Memoir about Love, Death and Survival.*

The evening will begin with live music by the Porter Brothers - George, from Minden, and his brother Steve, who now hails from Orillia. They are pleased to be part of the February Folk Festival activities throughout the County.

These Coffee House gatherings are open to all, at no admission fee, with light refreshments available. They are hosted by the Baha'i community of Haliburton County, offering live music and presentations to inform and inspire, and providing a space for discussions about how we can make our communities better places.

For further information, please call 416-606-9657.

Submitted

Land Between shares info for EH

On Tuesday, Feb.10 at 7 p.m., Environment Haliburton! will host a presentation by Leora Berman, Manager at The Land Between. In Haliburton County the health of the environment is directly linked to property values and tourism. The natural capital and systems support our own health and wellbeing in so many ways. To understand how, where and why, The Land Between has been involved in research related to our waters, fisheries, flora and fauna for decades. This data is now being used to model flood and drought resilience, food sovereignty potential, outdoor sports opportunities, natural pest control and the inherent features that support a healthy community. This data along with community knowledge is how we journey to resilience and community vitality.

Please join us to learn how to make smart decisions that will ensure a healthy and prosperous present and future in Haliburton. To register in advance for this important learning opportunity, please go to environmenthaliburton.org.

Submitted

Correction

Please note that there are some corrections required for the names shared in last week's Pic of the Past, featuring the 1976-1977 Bantams.

The correct names are below:

Top Row, Left to Right: Scott Welch, Ken Espie, Stewart Hogg, Phil Greenwell, Jamie Mckay, Martin Robachard

Front Row, Left to Right:Paul Madden, Peter Scheffee, Robbie Abbs, Darren McInnes, Winky Dodd, Alan Espie. Coaches: Paul Espie and Rick Wood

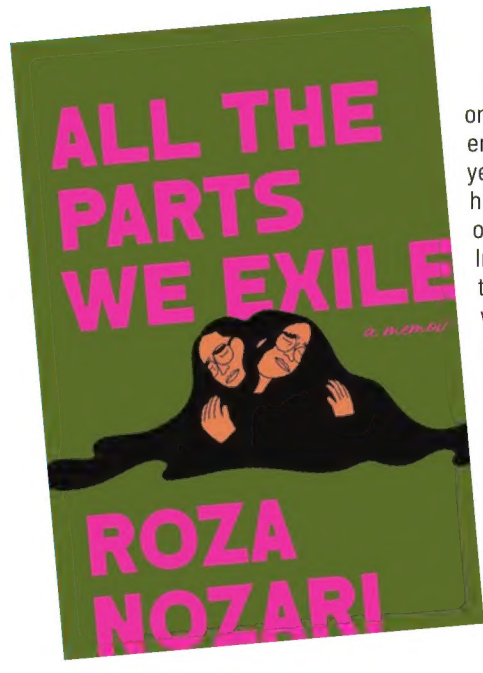
We apologize for this error.

Minden Memories

Peter Tripp, from Lutterworth, wearing a uniform from the Great War. /Photo courtesy of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre.

HALIBURTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Book of the Week



The youngest of three daughters and the only one born in Canada after her parents emigrated from Iran, Roza Nozari grew up yearning for belonging. She bonded with her mother over Iranian food and stories of their homeland, later falling in love with Iran during a visit. Yet Roza sensed something was amiss with her mother's happy, well-rehearsed story of their original departure. *In All the Parts We Exile,* Roza braids a tender narrative of her mother's life together with her own ongoing story of self-identity.

All the Parts We Exile by Roza Nozari is available to borrow from the Haliburton County Public Library. Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

Looking back while looking ahead

New dementia memoir offers hope to those hurting

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Fay Martin is known by many in the community.

She's sat on countless boards, volunteer organizations, and county-wide initiatives.

But there's one light not many have known her in. Not yet.

Fay and I sat down last week to discuss her newest role: life as an author.

Her book, *Dementia Widow, a Memoir About Love, Death and Survival* will be hitting the stands next month.

And while Martin has experienced the growing pains of authorship and the weaving and winding paths that have led to telling her story, the book itself will expose a whole new edge around the conversation of dementia: the element of being human.

"Invisibility and lack of recognition is a common theme of the book," said Martin, as she sipped her tea on a sunny winter afternoon. "The way we think about grieving is inadequate. It's not black and white. It's more of a flickering light. (With dementia) you are losing consistently."

Martin's husband, Michael Fay, died in June of 2020. He had battled cancer in his 50s, but was diagnosed with dementia in 2017. "I describe his death in detail (in the book)," said Martin, "because it was so beautiful. Michael died at home, in his own bed."

By diving into the inevitability of death and the grieving process as a whole, Martin hopes that it can present the opportunity for others to open up around the concept. She explained that she wants her words to reach not only those who are grieving, but also medical professionals and personal support workers.

But getting to this point didn't happen overnight. "When did it start," she asked. "That was a big question for me? In truth, it evolved with time."

Writing a memoir wasn't always in her cards. But as Martin saw her husband reaching his final days, she knew she needed to share this story. She ended up registering for a Masters of Fine Arts, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, all classes were run online. The day she officially started classes coincided with the one year anniversary of Michael's death. "It was a very full circle experience," she said.

And to look back over her life and times as a wife and then a caretaker through 46 years of marriage, it took a tremendous amount of dedication to the cause. "I've said it's like laying your guts out on a table, examining them inch by inch, disinfecting them, stuffing them back inside the cavity, stitching yourself up, and enduring the slithering as they find their way back into functional form," said Martin. "It sounds awful, and sometimes it is, but it surely helps you get to the bottom of big questions."

In the early days of Michael's health journey, the waters were choppy for the couple. Martin shared that she knew he had dementia, as he had shifted away from the person she had once fallen in love with. Often, she would take to her journals to air her frustrations and sift through the minutiae of her marriage. "In some ways, that got me through it," she said. "(The journals) pin-pointed in excruciating detail the emotional landscape."

But once an official dementia diagnosis was shared from medical professionals, pieces of the puzzle clicked into place. "It wasn't that he wouldn't be the person I married," said Martin, "it's that he couldn't be."

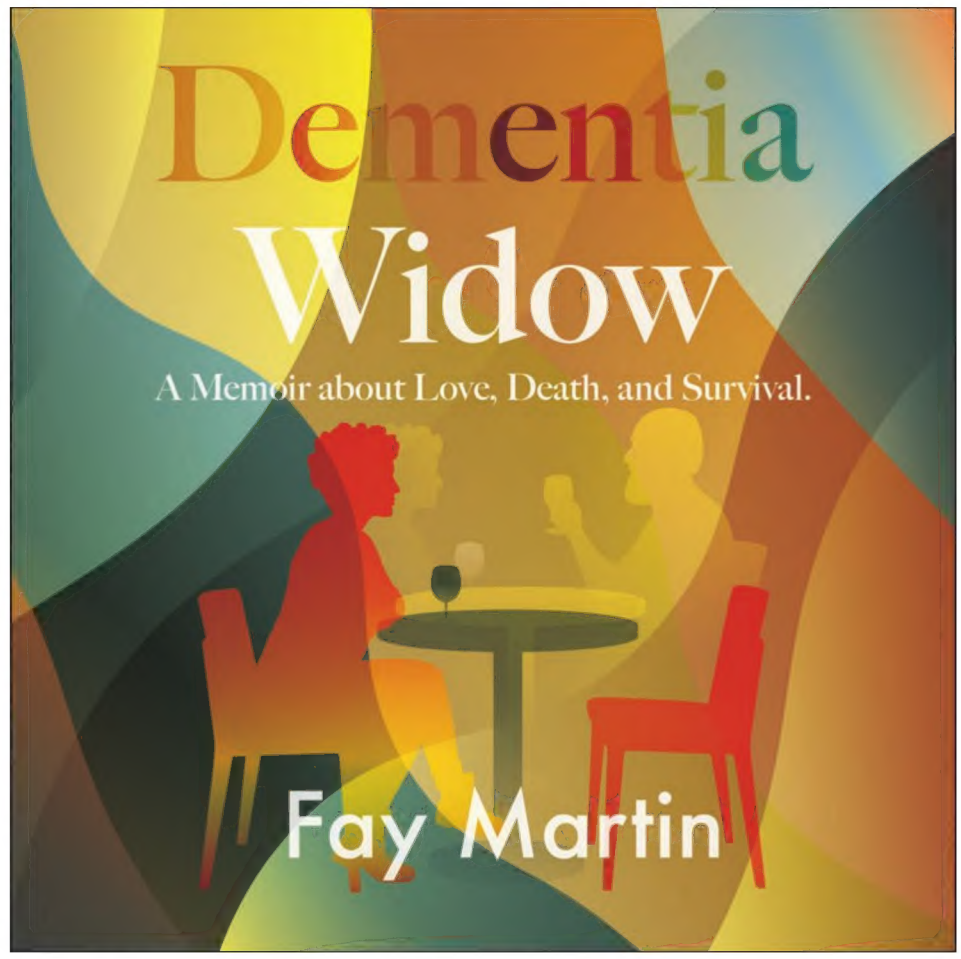
From that point, the lens of their marriage had changed, and some things got easier in a sense, while simultaneously getting increasingly more difficult.

Martin outlines each stage and setting of the chapters throughout the dementia journey; from early diagnosis, to co-existing, to death, and finally, to widowhood. She makes an effort to answer questions, to hold the medical systems accountable, and above all, to offer a human experience on a path that many walk on, but few discuss.

"I wrote the book to be helpful to others," she said. "And hearing the feedback that it's touched someone's life in some way."

Martin will be holding an official book launch on March 6 at the Rail's End Gallery in Haliburton, and invites all to join. For behind-the-scenes information on *Dementia Widow, a Memoir About Love, Death and Survival,* Martin sends out regular newsletters. More information can be found via her website, at www.faymartin.ca.

"There are no answers to truly big questions," said Martin. "There is only learning how to be content but engaged with the ambiguity of uncertainty. When it comes to living with dementia, that's the only way through."



The cover for Fay Martin's upcoming book, which will be available in early March. /submitted

U LINKS
CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH
SAVE THE DATE!
ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF RESEARCH
March 28th, 2026
11:30 am-3:30 pm
Haliburton Legion Lunch Included
Sustainable Agriculture & Community Wellness
Scan QR code to join our email list & get registration info

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Live music in local spaces across the Haliburton Highlands
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Hal High Monthly

Hal High Monthly is written by the Haliburton Highlands Secondary School leadership class featuring monthy school news.

By: Graham Backus (Gr. 12), Olivia Irvine (Gr. 11), Liam Mills (Gr. 12), Marley Williams-Clarry (Gr. 12)

From revision to results exams season is officially on.

Hal High has ended its first semester of the year. But don't let this fool you because we were just as active as ever with epic sports performances, exciting leadership activities, and all around upbeat attitudes.

The junior and senior basketball teams are now halfway through the season. The senior team remains undefeated with 11 victories and just a few more games left until the break. The junior team is working to finish the season strong.

The wrestling team has travelled to two tournaments so far, placing very well in each. This season was interrupted due to winter break, but they are back and ready on the mats until exams.

The junior and senior girls volleyball team have been playing hard all season. They are both going into the break strong, with good wins throughout this new year while the cross-country ski team is skiing their hearts out this year. The snow has benefited the team a lot, and they have been able to hold a race at Glebe Park this past December.

Clubs have slowed down to support focus on academics and studying, but some, like the movie club in room six, have been going strong every Wednesday. They ended the last week before exams with Jurassic Park.

While the anxiety surrounding exams came into fruition, it was hard at times to still enjoy school but leadership created a variety of events to help support students during this stressful time. Whether it's academic support, like the study lounges offered leading up to exams, physical activities, such as the stress relief dodgeball games, or encouraging positive mental health, such as the secret positive letters that were written anonymously by students around the school to help cheer everyone on in their studies, Leadership students stepped in to make the way to exams all the better.

Hal High has had a wonderful month and a great first semester. We can't wait to switch into our next set of classes, new sports seasons, and most importantly, bright opportunities that the next months may hold.

Serving skills

Haliburton and Minden schools came face to face last week for their annual volleyball tournament. The senior girls hosted at Archie Stouffer School, and showed off their weeks of dedicated practice time. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Ruth MacBrien celebrates 100 years

The Minden Times ran a story last week on the birthday of Ruth MacBrien. Upon publication, the family noted a number of inaccuracies in the article, and have requested that a revised story be published. The following story has been edited, revised, and approved by Lois Coltman and Ruth MacBrien. We apologize for the errors.

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

A remarkable woman celebrated her 100th birthday on Saturday, Jan. 31st.

Ruth MacBrien, the only living founder of Minden Bible Church, is a woman with a thousand stories. Likely more.

"My first memories are playing in a playground in the Hudson's Bay store in Winnipeg," she said. The early memory was of her mother, letting her play with other children while she did some shopping. Another fond memory, after moving to Niagara Falls, is crawling into an igloo that her older sister Marion had made.

"We came east when I was three and a half. My dad had been working on the railway. They went on strike, so my uncle said there was a job that he could do in Niagara Falls working on the generator at the Power Station there. Back in those days we moved a lot because dad followed the work. So he moved and mom, my older sister and I followed."

After staying in Niagara for a little more than two years, Ruth remembers that she loved foraging for mushrooms with her father.

"In Grade 1, you had to be in your sixth year to attend school in those days so I attended Hunewood School from January to June, in Toronto as my dad moved for work again. We lived in an apartment in the St. Clair area." For Grades 2 through 8, Ruth attended John R. Wilcox School. "I did well, I was valedictorian in Grade 8," she said. St. Clair was well built up, with stores, etc, the streets wide enough for two lanes and street car tracks in the center.

In her first year of high school, World War II began. Her favourite subjects were geography and writing. An active member of the school's choir, she remembers singing "When the Lights Go On Again (All over the World)," which reached number one on the charts in 1943.

"I had a good group of friends from my church who visited places together." On one occasion on a trip to Buffalo with a group of friends she recalls with a laugh, "We didn't have a place to sleep, so we slept on the floor of the library."

In 1939, Ruth met her future husband, Bob, through his older sister Betty, a member of their church group. "We had a lot of things in common. He was a painter and I dabbled in that a bit," said Ruth. Bob attended school in Toronto, living in a house that his dad had built for him because in Carnarvon, school only went to Grade 9 and he wanted to go to high school. He was born in Detroit and his family moved to Haliburton County when he was quite young. She noted that this was during the War. Bob joined the Navy where he operated the radar and transmitted messages using Morse Code, serving on the Cruiser Ontario for two years in World War II. While on leave after an appendicitis, he played tennis with Ruth and her friends in Aurora. She admits he wasn›t very good, but he was recovering from surgery, after all.

Ruth worked for Continental Life while she and her family moved to Aurora. Later, after taking the bus to commute to work, she was offered a job, closer, at Collis Leather, working in dictation. Ruth transcribed business conversations in shorthand while listening through a dictaphone. She was often required to do payroll, inventory, and write letters for the boss.

"In 1949, one of the girls in our church group wanted me to join her coming north to visit Bob's sister Betty at Brien's Pines Cottage Resort on Boshkung Lake. I didn't realize that Bob was doing some of the cooking there so we became reacquainted. I came again at Thanksgiving with Betty."

"Our first date was canoeing and it was awfully cold on the lake that time of year! Bob's mom got me warm by the cookstove in their warm kitchen. Our second date was climbing Ferguson's Mountain, now called Cooper's Mountain. He wanted to hike to the top to see the sunset. Of course it was dark when we came down, so of course he had to hold my hand."

She remembers her wedding day being a rainy day, having a sit-down supper, the wedding taking place at Oakwood Baptist Church. "My husband peeled the potatoes for the salad," Ruth said with a laugh.

In the spring of 1952, her husband Bob had a lung hemorrhage from a missed spot on the x-ray of his lung at discharge from the Navy which resulted in a year's stay at the sanitorium in Gravenhurst. They had moved north after having their first son in 1951, and stayed in a cottage at the Brien's Pines. "I loved it better up here," Ruth quipped. "I married someone from here. I loved it up here and never looked back."

Ruth and Bob have five children from their 66 years of marriage including Paul, Catherine, James, John, and Lois. At last count, on December 24, 2025 there are 13 grandchildren, 30 great grandchildren, and one great great grandchild.

Since Ruth was 12 years old she has been tatting. Her favourite method of self expression in art, tatting involves knotting fine lace in patterns over a core thread. An unforgiving art form, MacBrien says it requires precision. If a mistake is made, you need to start over. However it is an accessible craft, very portable that is done with a shuttle and your fingers. Ruth is one of the founding members of the Kinmount Artisan's Market, a dedicated volunteer at the Kinmount Fair in the Heritage Building for nearly 30 years, and a presenter at Stanhope Heritage Day. Ruth says that she first learned to tat from her grandmother. Her father learned alongside her to help her out. Tatting was a popular art in Europe, especially Spain.

"The story goes that my dad's family came from Spain as part of the Spanish Armada and got shipwrecked off the coast of Ireland," she said.

Ruth's talent in tatting is exemplified by her intricate snowflakes, doilies, flowers, bookmarks, and other geometric lace creations.

After moving to the Carnarvon area, Ruth worked for Carnarvon Lumber where she 'whipped their books in shape', and later worked alongside her husband as they operated Bob's TV and Hardware, later Hillside Pro Hardware.

Looking back on her longevity, Ruth says, "I am most proud of what my children have done."

Raising her children north of Carnarvon, she says that a lot has changed since she moved here.

"People have changed. It was very simple back then, everybody knew everyone else."

Many people have built their cottages around the local lakes near her and she no longer knows everyone's name.

She remembers a time when her husband's father, Victor MacBrien, donated land to build the Maple Lake Phone Exchange, a place where 'operator' Frona Sisson connected you to the person you were calling by manually plugging your wire into another socket on the board. You can see this system at the Haliburton Museum. Phone lines were not private, but 'party lines' with two or more people on the same line. Often when one picked up the phone, others would pick up the phone and you would hear 'click, click, click, click' as uninterested parties would hang up their phones. Each phone on a party line had a certain sequence in the ring. Ruth always answered only her calls and certainly didn't listen in on others' private conversations. Teddy, Frona's dog, delivered messages directly to people in friends' houses.

"When my sister-in law's baby was born, the dog sent the message down," she said with a chuckle

As the only living, founding member of Minden Bible Church, Ruth still regularly attends Sunday services with faith an important part of her life.

Marg Hinds, part of Minden Bible Church's Ministry Team says that Ruth MacBrien is like the 'First Lady' of Minden Bible Church.

"She is an incredible woman. We are very honoured to call her one of our own. She has been a mentor and role model to so many of us," said Hinds. "We are delighted to celebrate this birthday with her. We would love to wish her many, many more."

Ruth attests her longevity to her faith.

"I would say we grew up with Biblical principles. When you follow those, you can have peace of mind and live a life that is good," said Ruth, "trusting God to provide for all of your needs."

Ruth MacBrien's 100th Birthday Celebration took place on Saturday, Jan. 31 from 1 to 4 p.m. at Minden Bible Church, located at 177 Bobcaygeon Rd, with the cake cutting taking place at 2 p.m. In preparation of her 100th birthday, her daughter Lois has requested congratulatory letters from King Charles III, the Governor General of Canada, the Premier of Ontario, MP Jamie Schmale, and MPP Laurie Scott.

Edits and revisions made by Ruth MacBrien and Lois Coltman

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
PROPOSED ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT
TO ZONING BY-LAW 2005-120 OF
THE MUNICIPALITY OF DYSART ET AL

•DATE: **Tuesday, February 24, 2026**
•TIME: **9:05 AM**
•LOCATION: **Take notice that the public meeting for zoning by-law amendment will take place in Council Chambers in the Municipal Office 135 Maple Avenue, Haliburton, Ontario and in electronic format using Zoom. The meeting will be live streamed to YouTube.**

Applications:

Lands of Lee and Grierson - File No. D14-ZB-2025-008

Purpose and Effect: The proposed amendment will rezone a portion of the subject lands from Waterfront Residential Type 4L (WR4L) Zone to Waterfront Residential Type 6L (WR6L) Zone to ensure zoning consistency with the benefiting lands as a result of a recent severance application.

Location: 1739 Growler Lake Drive and 1 lot not assigned, legally described as Part Lot 6, Concession 9, Part 2, Plan 19R-6640, Part Lot 6, Concession 9, Part 1, Plan 19R-6325 in the Geographic Township of Guilford, now in the Municipality of Dysart et al.

Lands of 2772318 Ontario Inc. – File No. D14-ZB-2025-020

Purpose and Effect: The proposed amendment would rezone the subject property from Waterfront Residential Type 6L (WR6L) zone to Waterfront Residential Type 3L (WR3L) zone in order to recognize the lot areas and frontages of the subject property.

Location: Civic Address – not assigned, legally described as Part Lots 7 and 8, Concession 14, Parts 1-6, Plan 19R-6070, in the Geographic Township of Havelock, now in the Municipality of Dysart et al.

Lands of Stewart – File No. D14-ZB-2026-003

Purpose and Effect: Removal of the holding symbol which was put in place as per Section 36 (4) of the Planning Act R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13, means the registered owner has completed or demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Municipality, all of the conditions outlined in Section 3 c) of By-law 2026-06. A copy of By-law 2026-06 containing a complete list of the conditions is available at the Municipal office at 135 Maple Avenue in Haliburton during working hours and it will be posted with the staff report for lands of Stewart available on-line with the Council agenda for February 24, 2026.

Location: Civic Address – 3023 Trapper's Trail Road, legally described as Part Lots 17 and 18, Concession 4, Lot 27, Plan 636, Part 2, Plan 19R-6824 in the Geographic Township of Dudley, now in the Municipality of Dysart et al.

For more information about electronic meetings and public participation in an electronic meeting, contact the Planning Technician at twilson@dysartetal.ca,.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS MATTER INCLUDING INFORMATION ABOUT APPEAL RIGHTS: Contact the Planning and Land Information Department by appointment during regular office hours (8:30 A.M-4:30 P.M, Monday to Friday), or by contacting Kris Orsan, Manager of Planning at korsan@dysartetal.ca.

Dated at the Township of Dysart, this 3rd day of February 2026.

Kris Orsan, CPT,
Manager of Planning
Planning and Land Information
Municipality of Dysart et al
135 Maple Avenue, Haliburton, Ontario K0M 1S0
Phone: 705-457-1740 ext. 626
E-mail: korsan@dysartetal.ca

Former fire hall adds heat to budget talks

from page 1

"Strong Mayor's Act puts councillors at the crossroads of principle, practicality, and public trust," said Councillor Shirley Johannessen. "And it really does change the culture of our council, and our constituents are not understanding the process."

Johannessen noted that constituents rarely see the "internal tug of war"; noting the back and forth of question asking and additional insight, "but it is exactly what engaged councillors go through."

"I continue to be against the Strong Mayor's Act," added Councillor Pam Sayne. "In a very strong way." Sayne noted that she has made an effort to implement workshops, which have been shut down, to ensure boundaries are not crossed between staff and council members. "I feel really responsible for trying to do the right thing, and trying to move us in the right direction," she added.

"To me this is not about a budget, this is about politics," she said. "Each member of the community brings unique strengths and weaknesses, and everyone has a vital role within the governing structures and operations. The Strong Mayor's Act is not an exception of this."

Sayne noted that while the conversations around the act has caused rife throughout council, the implementation of it has likely saved the township staff time and efficiency, as it has developed set timelines for deadlines around approving the budget early in the year. "This prevents delays, reduces financial uncertainty, and tenders to be issued in a timely manner, resulting in operational efficiencies and cost savings," she said. "So in fact this Strong Mayor's Act is probably saving us time because our staff get start off the mark much sooner."

With that, she noted that she supports the budget as presented by Carter, including the vetoes made, as she believes they are in-line with social and environmental priorities for the community, and offers the greatest support to local staff.

> ***"Let us support this budget today in support of our community, and our staff, and let's not get tangled up in politics ..."***
>
> — Councillor Pam Sayne

"Let us support this budget today in support of our community, and our staff, and let's not get tangled up in politics," said Sayne.

Carter went through each individual veto, to which council members were required to vote for each one. Upon his declaration of vetoes to the proposed amendments made by council, Carter was required to publicly share his reasoning for each, allowing for transparency with constituents.

Prior to the recorded voting process of the vetoes, Township Clerk Vicki Bull explained the process of requiring a 2/3rd vote to override a veto. "This means that five members of council need to vote in favour to carry the motion, otherwise the motion is defeated," she said. If council members vote for, they are voting in favour of the override. If they vote against, it means they are in opposition to the override.

One of the major topics brought forward was the deconstruction of the former fire hall. Council had suggested an amendment to add $50,000 to the budget to put towards an initiative to remove the building. Carter had vetoed that amendment due to a lack of planning around the project. "I'm just not sure we should be making an investment of one piece in an overall larger plan," he said. "And increasing everyone's taxes by half a percent to do that. This is an ill-defined proposal, and I think it should be going into a future budget and not into this old fire hall."

Councillor Ivan Ingram firmly disagreed. "It's been way too many plans as far as I'm concerned and we've been sitting here, doing absolutely nothing," he said. "It's an eye sore. We don't need to wait for them (constituents) to make a decision, that's what we're here for."

"It's hard to put money towards something that has no plan," said Councillor Sayne. "I've had lots of proposals from folks ... I would like to see the municipal perspective come back on this to know what people want to have done ... We're piecemealing, we're putting the cost before the budget."

The majority of council members voted in favour of the override, allowing it to carry.

In total, out of the eight suggested overrides to the vetoes, three were carried and five were overridden. Councillors Ingram, Johannessen, McKelvey, and Sisson were consistent in their votes to support the overrides, while Councillors Schell and Sayne voted both for and against a number of the overrides. Carter was steadfast in voting against the overrides.

With the say of council put in place and the overrides officially defeated or carried, the 2026 Minden budget is officially approved.

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AH airs parking concerns

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

The BA Group has returned to Algonquin Highlands council to discuss some parking options.

In a special council meeting on Thursday, Jan. 29, council received a report on the group's progress that has involved comparing AH policies with other local municipalities, as well as gathering further recommendations from council.

A list of the interests discussed from council included parking for water access only properties, an increase in short term rentals, accommodating day trippers, outdoor adventure access, safety, boat launches, fairness per user, enforcement challenges, and paying for improvements. One of the main areas of contention was the notiong that short term rentals must provide a parking space for each bedroom. "Some of the concerns that we have received to date is that this is a cash grab," said AH Mayor Liz Danielsen.

The mayor said that the council needs to consider payment for parking necessary for cost recovery as well as what locations have the highest priority as part of their Asset Management Plan.

For many of BA Group's recommendations, local municipality's policies that were reviewed included Orillia, City of Kawartha Lakes, Bracebridge, and Gravenhurst, amongst others.

The first topic for discussion was user fees. Notably, Haliburton, Minden Hills, Highlands East, and Lake of Bays all have time limits for parking, with no parking meters.

The other main points that the BA Group were focusing on included parking for STRs, planning policies, and the enforcement of parking spaces.

"There have been a number of municipalities that have moved away from meters," said Stuart Anderson, an engineer with BA Consulting Group.

"The bigger the municipality, the more common it was to charge for parking," said Michael Giallonardo, planner for the organization.

Larger towns with downtown centres such as Lindsay and Tobermory have paid parking. Some municipalities investigated have parking permits for residents. Parking costs more for non-residents.

"We can spend a lot of time by stirring the public up by talking about parking fees," said Chris Card, parks, recreation,and trails manager.

Adam Thorn, public works manager, spoke up to remind the council that there are many steps that need to be taken before payment options are considered. He reported that many people have called and emailed him in the past week saying that AH was pursuing parking fees as a 'money grab'.

"I am still stuck on that if we build a parking lot and you want to reserve a spot, you should have to pay for it," said Danielsen.

Thorn discussed the issues with Big Hawk Lake Road. Due to the rock cut that impacts space along the road, there needs to be careful discussion regarding parking. A parking lot may be the solution, but it would need the funds to be built properly and last indefinitely.

"If these parking lots do get built, we do have to enforce them," said Thorn. "It usually takes one time to tow a vehicle and then it stops it."

Thorn reminded the council that people parking along Big Hawk Lake Road is illegal. They have allowed it in the past, but it is now getting out of hand. It is not one issue, but a snowballing demand and blocking of the road.

Later in the discussion, Danielsen reminded council that enforcement of all parking could not be reliant on the OPP.

Applicable best practices and recommendations for best steps will be BA Group's next step.

"The final report will give us an opportunity to give us a number of next steps to drill down on," said Card.

"I think we have enough to go forward with to determine a parking philosophy," said Anderson.

Ice fishing derby returns to Stanhope

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

The work that our firefighters do is truly wondrous. Saving people's lives, property, and educating people about fire safety.

The impact that firefighters have on our communities goes beyond safety. They cement themselves as crucial pillars of the community.

As leaders in our community, one of the initiatives firefighters take upon themselves is their annual Children's Christmas Party.

Last year, the celebration at the Stanhope Community Centre brought dozens of kids and hundreds of residents out to celebrate the Christmas season with Santa and music.

West Popp, vice president of the Stanhope Firefighter Association is responsible for the resuscitation of Stanhope's ice fishing event. He has been serving as a captain with the Algonquin Highlands Fire Department for the past five years.

"The Stanhope Ice Fishing Derby used to be a long-standing tradition, that unfortunately hasn't run in a few years," said Popp. "This year we decided to bring it back in hopes that we can help raise funds and support for our community events."

The Stanhope Firefighters' Association's Ice Fishing Derby is run entirely by volunteers of the association and local firefighters.

Families and fishers of all ages are invited to participate in the event on Feb. 16 at 8:30 a.m. Hosted at Elvin Johnson Park on Halls Lake, entry for the event is $40. The event will be running until 4:30 p.m.

With Feb. 16 being Family Day weekend, Canadian residents do not require a fishing licence. Participants must carry identification and comply with conservation limits and regulations.

Popp hopes that the event is hugely successful and something that becomes an annual tradition.

"As a fire department, it is nice to be able to show that we are there for our community and more than just firefighters," said Popp. "We are here for public education, information, along with emergency services."

Come on out on Family Day to enjoy a friendly ice fishing competition for the whole family. There will be refreshments available and it is a perfect opportunity to meet your neighbours and give back to the community.

Prizes will be awarded to those who catch the biggest fish. There will also be door prizes given out. All prizing has been donated graciously by local businesses.

www.mindenhills.ca In Case of Emergency Dial 911 / After-Hours Municipal Emergency Dial 1-866-856-3247

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COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted in-person (Council Chambers, 7 Milne St., Minden) and with electronic participation. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

February 12 – Regular Council Meeting
February 26 – Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link.

SAFE WINTER DRIVING

The safest place is well behind the plow. Wait for plows to pull over before passing. Don't accelerate too quickly —the road ahead is unplowed and could be slick or snowy. Avoid parking in the street. Plows can't clear roads that are blocked by parked cars.

MINDEN HILLS CULTURAL CENTRE

- A selection of artwork from the Agnes Jamieson Gallery's permanent collection, as well as new acquisitions, is now on display.
- We will host a free screening of Speakers for the Dead (2000) on Thursday, February 5 at 1:00 PM. The documentary uncovers the forgotten history of a Black settlement in rural Ontario. In collaboration with the Haliburton County Public Library, this screening is open to all ages. Admission is free. No pre-registration is required.
- Join the UFO's (UnFinished Objects Craft Group) in the Welch Room on Friday, February 6 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM.
- Join the Lapine Lap Mural Tour, part of the Hike Haliburton Festival Winter Edition on Saturday, February 7 at 10:00 AM. Starting at the Township of Minden Hills Administration Building, the tour is an easy, guided walk highlighting large-scale reproductions of André Lapine's paintings. The walk wraps up at the Agnes Jamieson Gallery, where visitors are invited to explore our current André Lapine exhibition alongside the gallery's permanent collection. For more information and to register: https://www.facebook.com/HikeHaliburton

For information on all the programs and exhibits offered at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre: culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca or call 705-286-3763.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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- Cultural Centre Summer Students
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Seasonal Waste Disposal Site Attendants

Please visit our website www.mindenhills.ca/careers for more information and how to apply.

FAMILY DAY AT THE S.G. NESBITT MEMORIAL ARENA

The Arena will be open on Monday, February 16th, 2026, for Family Day. Join us for a variety of family friendly activities!

NEW TEXTILE RECYCLING LOCATION ADDED AT THE INGOLDSBY TRANSFER STATION

We're excited to share that our textile recycling program has expanded. In addition to the Scotch Line Landfill, you can now drop off gently used clothing, linens, and more at the Ingoldsby Transfer Station. Accepted donations include towels, sheets, blankets, fashion accessories such as scarves and belts, as well as books and stuffed animals.

7 Milne Street, PO Box 359, Minden, ON K0M 2K0 705-286-1260 Toll Free: 1-844-277-1260 Fax 705-286-4917 Township.Minden.Hills Minden Hills@twpmindenhills @Township_MindenHills

Little Beans changes hands and welcomes all

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

The new face(s) of Little Beans Play Cafe in Minden, Emma and her daughter are eager to welcome little ones to the space. /submitted

Many parents of Haliburton County will start to see a new face in Minden.

Emma Graves has taken over the business of Little Beans Play Cafe in the heart of Minden, and she has big dreams of making it a success. "When I think something is possible," the mom of four shared, "I just jump in with my heart first."

Little Beans was started by Janelle Nesbitt late last year. While Nesbitt had a vision for what the parents of the county needed, she felt she didn't have capacity to see it through. As a full-time nurse on top of being a business owner and a mom, Nesbitt knew she had a tough decision to make.

"While I loved creating this space, I realized I don't love owning a business the way I love being a nurse," said Nesbitt. "Nursing isn't just my job - it's my calling, and it's where I feel most fulfilled serving my community every single day."

When Graves caught wind that Nesbitt may be looking to sell the business, the gears started turning in her mind. As a mom of four, ages 18, 16, 14, and eight months, she had plenty of experience working with kids of all ages and stages.

While she has a background in human resources and consultancy, her sparkle truly starts to shine when she's working with kids. During a turning point in her life, Graves started working at Compass Early Years Centre in Minden. During that time, she became pregnant with her fourth child, and as she navigated maternity leave with her daughter, Posey, the opportunity to step into Little Beans started to take shape.

"I'm the type of person who can't sit still," said Graves. "We came (to Little Beans) all the time, and I believe in this space so much."

Graves has been working with Nesbitt over the past month to streamline the transition process between ownership, and stepped into the lead role as of Feb. 1. "Knowing that Emma can walk in turnkey, pour her passion and expertise into this space, and make it even more beautiful brings me so much peace," said Nesbitt. "Growth sometimes looks like building, and sometimes it looks like honouring where your heart truly belongs."

With additional programs on the roster for the space, including a caregiver circle presented by the Haliburton Midwives, infant CPR and first aid training, PA Day enrichment programs, a games club, and an infant circle around healthy sleeping habits, the play cafe offers a wide variety of programs and services to parents and kids alike. "We can get more visibility through community partnerships," said Graves. "I'm the type of person who will try everything to see what works for the community."

While Graves is optimistic about the future, she is also mindful of the fact that small businesses don't always succeed. "I'm nervous about that," she said. "But I am not letting that control me ... I 'm a spontaneous person, and a big dreamer, and I definitely believe that everything is possible."

Little Beans Play Cafe is located at 101 Bobcaygeon Road in Minden. More information can be found at www.littlebeansplaycafe.net.

Land Trust Discovery Days kicks off this month

The Haliburton Highlands Land Trust is excited to offer Land Trust Discovery Days 2026, a series of educational events, workshops, and guided walks to be held throughout the year. Some themes and topics to look forward to this year are Animal Tracks and Signs, Spring Wildflowers and Leeks, Don Smith Memorial Bird Walk, Fungi in our World and more.

We are also very excited to be sponsoring a presentation by Speaking of Wildlife to two local schools with funding from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. Details to follow.

The first event of the season is designed to engage our young learners: Animal Tracks and Signs for Children. This event will take place on Sunday, Feb. 15 at the Haliburton Outdoors Association – Fish Hatchery, from 10 a.m. to noon. Children from ages five to 12 will enjoy hands-on activities and a walk outdoors led by Outdoor Educator Rick Whitteker. An adult must accompany the registered child. This event is offered by donation with funding from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation and with thanks to Abbey Gardens for the use of materials and for the booklet development. Pre-registration is required.

Registration for this event and for all other Land Trust Discovery Days events should be done online at www.haliburtonlandtrust.ca under the Events tab.

The Haliburton Highlands Land Trust has a purpose to protect the lands and waters of Haliburton County for future generations. One of the ways we do this is to educate people of all ages to understand and appreciate the species that live here. We hope that our Land Trust Discovery Days will offer a fun and interesting way for people to engage with nature and learn about the natural environment we share.

Submitted

Have a thought, comment or opinion you'd like to share?

Send a letter to the editor to
emily@haliburtonpress.com

Unlocking Tourism Trends 2026 edition; OHTO

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

In a post-pandemic world, trends with tourism in rural areas have changed.

On Jan. 27, the Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) hosted a Zoom session titled "Unlocking Tourism Trends 2026." The presentation, conducted by Amy Hogue, communications and marketing specialist with Dragonfly Communications, and Kasey Rogerson director of industry development with OHTO was intended to educate tourism operators across the Highlands on trends and methods to better prepare themselves for the 2026 season.

The presenters utilized data from a variety of sources including the Canadian Tourism Data Collective, Propulso, Data Appeal Sentiment Index, Statistics Canada, and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming, among others.

"By continuing to reinforce the independence of the tourism economy, we hope to have greater independence going forward," said Hogue.

In 2024, there were 4.2 million visitors to the Highlands with 1.3 million unique visitors and 2.4 million same-day visits. Interestingly, only 1.8 million of the visits included an overnight stay.

"This tells us that visitors are having repeat visits, which is a good thing," said Hogue. Day travel offerings are growing faster than overnight offerings.

The top demographics to appeal to include outdoor explorers who are looking for adventure driven, high engagement activities, family oriented offerings that focus on relaxing and familial bonding at well known kid-friendly destinations, and simplicity lovers for those who are wanting a quick, easy escape with low stress scenic travelling.

Tourists primarily visited from Ontario and Quebec, with the United States at only 6 per cent of visitors. Toronto and Ottawa were the primary hometown of visitors. The closer proximity of these Ontario cities allow for visitors to make more day trips throughout the year. Key experiences for these visitors included enjoying local cuisine (at restaurants, breweries, and farmer's markets) and experiencing nature. Nature experiences include things like enjoying the beach, hiking, and paddling.

The demand is highest for visitors to taste local cuisines and experience a sense of place.

"That is where storytelling should be focused," said Hogue.

Overall, guests are valuing overall experience quality over price. Hogue says that this should be reflected in your business' marketing that shows the value your experience has.

Some of the biggest barriers for visitors are the cost of travel, gas prices, traffic, crowdedness, and getting maximum value for their money.

"This doesn't mean no one is travelling," said Hogue. "Nearly nine out of ten Ontarians said they had plans to travel in the province"

The key takeaway from these barriers is that people are still travelling, but are becoming more selective when making decisions.

"Our region is experiencing a significant year-after-year growth," said Hogue.

When surveyed, travellers across the Highlands enjoyed being able to learn about the local culture, history, and meeting local people.

While only 13 per cent of trips included arts or culture activities, these trips accounted for 30 per cent of total spending.

"Arts and culture tourists spend more, stay longer, and are more likely to visit from overseas."

A third of all international visitors engage in some form of cultural activity.

Contrary to what many think, visitors remained high after August, the peak of tourism season. The visitors remained consistent until December, with February and March seeing the lowest number of visitors.

With this stretching of the tourism season into the fall and early winter, OHTO encourages strengthening shoulder season offerings and encouraging the creation of itineraries and events for people to decide to stay overnight.

For operators across the Highlands, tourism is now a year-round venture. Hogue also noted that revenue is dependent on conversion and experience design, same day visitations are the largest opportunity for growth, experiences must reflect real travel behaviour, and clarity and ease of accessing your activities are competitive advantages.

"Friction is the difference between interest and action," said Hogue.

To take advantage of travellers, it is best to know how travellers are learning of tourism opportunities.

When beginning to think of an experience, people will start by reading summarized results from Google or asking AI. After consulting AI, people tend to look at Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube to confirm what "feels real."

With this increase in AI usage and social media, there is a trend of "zero-click" behaviour, meaning that there is less quantifiable engagement across tourism websites, but those that do engage with websites have high intent.

YouTube Shorts or Instagram Reels were the most popular forms of exploring tourism ideas.

Success is being easy to understand and clearly showing trust to visitors, says Hogue.

Websites now need to be clear for AI to summarize, while utilizing your own marketing and advertising to come across as authentic.

"We are still seeing itinerary downloads, but less page views," explained Hogue. "AI is here to stay and we should all take note. It is no longer experimental"

Hogue advises against purely marketing with AI. Customers can tell when videos and graphics use AI and imply artificiality and negativity. AI can still be used to assist with other aspects of your business such as research and planning.

"Find a way to modify content and make it truly your own," said Hogue.

Email newsletters are another tool to take advantage of, with low costs.

Learning language models and search engine optimizations are key to be successful in 2026. Writing for your business needs to be easily discoverable by these technologies in addition to being pleasurable by human readers.

From 2023 to 2024 the Highlands saw a decrease of 15 accommodation businesses. With an exploding popularity of short term rentals (STRs), there is more competition for businesses wanting visitors to book their stay.

Haliburton County holds the greatest percentage of STRs across Ontario's Highlands, and the highest average daily rate of accommodation at $394.

"We are anticipating that what we see from 2024 is our new normal to replace what 2019 was," said Rogerson.

Arts and culture businesses such as musical groups, performing art companies, and theatres have the greatest potential to support growths in tourism. However, they also face the highest disparity of seasonal revenue fluctuations and funding gaps. These businesses have a high risk of closing within three years of opening, and find it difficult to sustain operations across 12 months. To support these business ventures and increase overnight stays, OHTO recommends boosting the presence of local arts practitioners and events.

"It is very exciting to say that our operator sentiment for 2026 is optimistic and year after year, it continues to grow," said Rogerson.

Climate change is now a crucial factor for the future of tourism trends, with an expected 20 days less of winter in the years between 2041 to 2070. High humidex days will continue to increase. The rising cost of travel and increased weather variability pose a huge threat to the future of tourism in the Highlands.

To combat effects from climate change, OHTO encourages further development of summer festivals and events that take place in the summer season.

With projected decreases in air quality, event organizers need to be aware of alternative ways to accommodate guests who cannot be outside.

Dark Eyed Junco by Jill Moulton

Pine marten visit by Tammy Nash

Culinary car reviews boosting local businesses

ADAM FRISK
Journalist

Guy Alaimo has started providing honest online reviews of restaurants and food options in the area, boosting interest in the county's culinary scene. /submitted

If you happen to see a man sitting in a vehicle in a local parking lot speaking enthusiastically at his smartphone while clutching a meatball sub, don't be alarmed. You have likely spotted Guy Alaimo in his natural habitat.

The local resident, whose TikTok and Instagram accounts are taking off across the County, and beyond, has become the region's most unlikely and most honest culinary reviewer. With his high energy, "a bit loud and obnoxious," delivery, Alaimo is striving to bring transparency back to food reviews, one chicken parm sandwich at a time.

"I've always liked eating food, and I've always kind of been fascinated with doing reviews on food," he said in a recent interview. "When I was in college in Victoria, B.C., I wrote a column for the school paper, and I would make fun of the cafeteria food because it was terrible. And so I would make fun of them. Every week."

Then, after a stint at Ontario's Humber College for comedy writing and performance, and a period spent "bombing" on the stand-up circuit, Alaimo found his true calling behind a steering wheel. Well, aside from his full-time job in Haliburton.

"I've always wanted to entertain people," he explained. "In comedy, I was inconsistent. But I realized I have a good presence and I'm good at performing. When I saw the food review stuff taking off, I knew I could do it, but I wanted to do it right."

So, he got into doing food reviews on social media, something that stemmed from a frustrating experience. After following a Toronto influencer's recommendation to a "terrible" restaurant, Alaimo realized the reviewer had been paid to give a glowing report without disclosing the sponsorship.

"I thought, 'This is messed up,'" he recalled. "I have a good job, a pension, and benefits. I don't need money from these places. It's more fun if I don't tell them I'm coming."

And that's what he does. Making his way through the County, and beyond, Alaimo seeks out restaurants and food trucks to sample some menu offerings. To maintain his integrity, Alaimo goes to great lengths to remain anonymous. He said he never accepts free meals and often sends his wife into restaurants to pick up orders so staff won't recognize him. He then retreats to his car, his "mobile studio," to record his raw, unfiltered reactions.

"It's 100 per cent honest," he said. "I've gone to places, paid $22 for a meal that looked like a Buddy Burger, and just couldn't do the review. I won't send people somewhere if the food isn't good."

His approach has earned him a loyal following from Toronto to Thunder Bay, and even a strange, unexplained pocket of fans in Cleveland, Ohio, hence the Browns attire in some of his recordings. His videos have surpassed hundreds of thousands of views, and driving "food road trips" to the County from as far away as Richmond Hill.

But the heart of Alaimo's work is community support. Local spots like Burnt Crust in Minden and Feast & Fusion in Kinmount have seen a "Guy Alaimo bump" in business.

"It feels good to do something for the businesses," he said. "The Burnt Crust guys told me people were coming from hours away just because of my review. That makes me feel accomplished."

However, the gig of a viral reviewer isn't all gravy. Alaimo admitted that the "dopamine rush" of viral success can be a double-edged sword for his mental health.

"Sometimes it's not good because you wake up at 3 a.m. looking at comments," he said. "The whole thing is about engagement, so I find myself addicted to responding to everyone.

"I'm trying to get better at not being on it so much," he said.

As the food reviewer begins to exhaust the menus of the Highlands, Alaimo said he might expand to Muskoka, Toronto, and even a "Rust Belt" trip to Lake Erie.

But for now, he remains the region's most authentic digital advocate, even if he's a little shy with some of the viral success.

"I went into a place I had reviewed recently, and they wanted to cover my meal," he said with a laugh. "I told them, 'No, please just take my gift card.' I want to keep it real."

You can follow Alaimo and watch his reviews on Instagram @guy_alaimo and on TikTok @guyalaimo.

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Haliburton rocks the ROM

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

This graphite specimen was in the collection of H. E. T. Haultain and donated to the Royal Ontario Museum after his passing. Originally harvested in Haliburton, this specimen is currently on display in the new Critical Minerals installation, on display until Jan. 3, 2027. /Courtesy of ROM (Royal Ontario Museum), Toronto, Canada.

With artifacts from across the globe and fantastic specimens of animals, rocks, and minerals from across Canada, visitors may not expect to see representation of Haliburton County on display at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM).

Over this past winter break, I took a trip into Toronto to visit the ROM. While looking through the Earth's Treasures room, I was surprised to see a sample of graphite from Haliburton, as well as samples of fluororichterite from Wilberforce.

Curious to connect Haliburton County to the most famous museum in Canada, I was graciously able to contact Veronica Di Cecco, a collections technician in mineralogy from the ROM.

"Haliburton County and Hastings are the two places in Ontario we have the most samples from," said Di Cecco.

The ROM has only a small selection of samples on display for the public, about two per cent.

In their collection, the ROM has 653 specimens collected from Haliburton County.

Di Cecco estimates over 110 species of minerals can be found in the collection from Haliburton County.

"Haliburton County is famous for uranium in the mineral world," said Di Cecco.

Other species in the collection include fluorite and samples from the world's largest zircon deposit, she said.

Zircon is crucial in the manufacturing of ceramics and the dentistry industry. Zircon is also used to determine the age of rocks.

These species are just a small fraction of the 6,000 total number of mineral species on our planet. The ROM strives to collect examples from across Canada and internationally, when required for their extensive collection.

"It's like Pokemon, we try to catch them all," said Di Cecco.

The ROM has three ways of getting species for their collection including donations from the public, purchasing them, and harvesting them themselves.

The specimen of graphite that I saw on display as part of their Critical Minerals display was donated by H. E. T. Haultain to the University of Toronto in April of 1917. The ROM became a separate entity from the University in 1968.

"The number is very early for our collection," said Di Cecco.

Haultain was a civil engineer who was responsible for creating the Iron Ring ceremony in Canada, with help from Rudyard Kipling.

The fluororichterite sample on display from Wilberforce is labelled to be from the George Earle Farm. In 1986, the widening of the road exposed a large formation of fluororichterite. A representative from the ROM rushed to the area to collect some specimens. Prior to the 1980s, fluororichterite was only believed to be found in Russia.

To complete the roadway, the ROM reported that all of the fluororichterite had either been harvested, or destroyed by construction.

While the exposed fluororichterite is heavily depleted, portions of the deposit remain protected in the County.

"In many cases, the ROM is a repository for the Earth's geologic history," said Di Cecco.

The Highlands Express from August of 1979 reports that some of the semi-precious stones that can be found in the surrounding areas of Haliburton County include sodalite, apatite, fluororichterite, amazonite, and trilliumite.

Tory Hill is famous for having the mineral titanite. Di Cecco says that one specimen she is fond of is "not very pretty" but it makes up for in its size.

The reason for Haliburton County's prolific amount of specimens is due to the situation on top of Grenville Province. The Grenville province can be imagined as an ancient mountain range that has been eroded over a billion years, filled with rocks and minerals.

Critical Minerals is a new gallery installation that was put on display in September of last year. The purpose of the installation is to shine a light on the minerals that will be needed towards a net zero society.

Many countries, including Canada, have agreed to work towards net carbon neutrality.

The example of graphite as mentioned earlier, from Haliburton, is important to the use of graphite in technology. In an electric vehicle, about 60 kilograms of its weight is from graphene, a thin layer of graphite used in batteries.

Critical minerals are discussed frequently in the news cycle. Necessary for green energy solutions and to support population growth, the supply of critical minerals is under threat with exploding demands for technology. The exhibit is intended for visitors to consider their impact and demand for critical minerals.

While Canada currently relies on foreign countries like China for resources, there are plenty of sources of cobalt, nickel, copper, graphite, lithium and rare earth metals in Canada itself.

A lot of thought and care goes into deciding on the pieces for exhibits at the ROM. An iconic cultural institution of Ontario, Di Cecco chose specimens that are exemplary of their species. Ultimately, she hopes kids are inspired by their visit and fall in love with the sciences just as she had.

"It is the reason why I do this job," said Di Cecco ."So much of it is being able to help kids like me."

The Critical Minerals installation will be on display until Jan. 3, 2027. If you are interested in the scientific history of Ontario, the ROM currently has an exhibition titled *Crawford Lake: Lawyers of Time* on until Sept. 13 of this year.

Crawford Lake, located just outside of Milton, Ontario. The lake is meromitic, meaning that its surface water and deep water do not mix. Due to this, the lake is a perfect case study for analyzing sediment at the bottom to analyze different epochs of time. Crawford Lake has been determined as a global reference point for Earth's stratagraphical record. A similar meromitic lake, Blackcat Lake, was a contender to be part of a World Conservation Site in 2004.

Haliburton County may be one key in the puzzle of Canada striving towards a self-sufficient green energy future.

The Royal Ontario Museum will be having open Rock, Mineral, Gem, and Fossil ID Clinics this year. Attending the ID clinic is free, with ROM staff or a volunteer identifying the sample you bring in. So far, two meteorites have been authenticated with this program.

"Go to the ROM, go to your local museum, go out for a hike," asks Di Cecco.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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6	2	4	9	1	8	3	5	7
7	3	9	6	2	5	4	8	1
1	8	5	3	7	4	9	2	6
5	7	2	8	3	6	1	4	9
4	1	3	5	9	7	2	6	8
9	6	8	2	4	1	5	7	3
2	5	1	7	8	3	6	9	4
3	9	7	4	6	2	8	1	5
8	4	6	1	5	9	7	3	2

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Huskies Hockey

In a hard-fought game this past weekend, the Haliburton County Huskies fell to the Markham Royals on Saturday 5-1. The local team will be hosting the Burlington Cougars this Saturday in Minden. The Huskies are currently holding the fifth position in the Eastern Conference for the OJHL, with 27 wins out of the past 46 games. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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		4		1				
7		9					8	
			3	7				
		2				1		
			5	9				
9	6	8	2					3
	5					6		4
3								
8					9	7		2

Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

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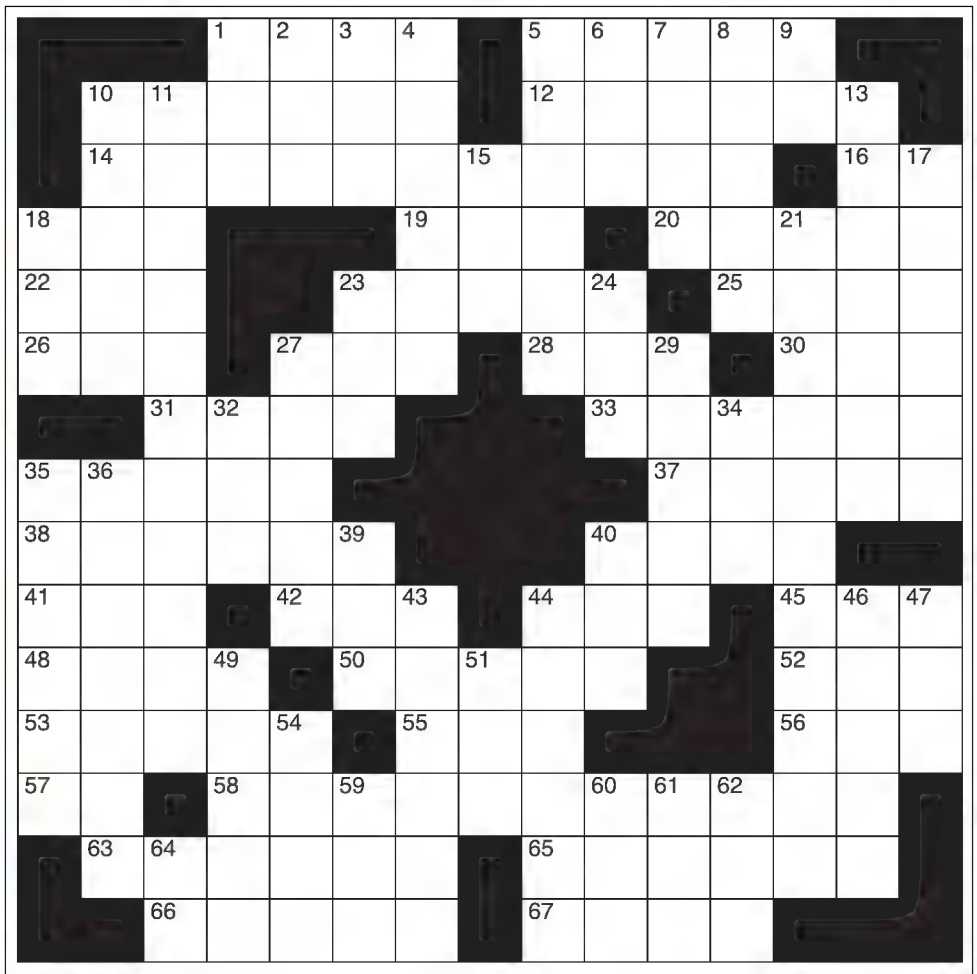
Answers on page 17



CLUES ACROSS
1. Native American group of N. California
5. Geological times (Brit. sp.)
10. Tool to remove
12. Rods
14. One who renews
16. They precede C
18. Chatter incessantly
19. __ King Cole, musician
20. Insect parts
22. One from Utah
23. The world of the dead
25. Singer Redding
26. NBA legend Nelson
27. Indicates wrongly
28. Unhappy
30. Anger
31. Dark brown
33. Some are in kitchens
35. Made a mistake
37. Damp
38. Type of fuel
40. Actor Damon
41. What thespians do
42. One's mother
44. Disallow
45. Swiss river
48. A banana has one
50. Philippines lake and volcano are two
52. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
53. Agave
55. Journalist Tarbell
56. One-time tech giant
57. Indicates upon
58. Intestinal bacteria
63. Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
65. It goes with nook
66. A fashion
67. Very eager to hear or see

CLUES DOWN
1. Witch
2. Utilize
3. Writing utensil
4. Where rockers go to work
5. Subsides
6. Consume
7. Greek mythological figures
8. California mountain town
9. Tin
10. Muse of lyric and love poetry
11. Animates anew
13. Humorous criticisms
15. Cool!
17. Worst
18. Wet dirt
21. Designed to be useful
23. Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
24. High schoolers' test
27. Computer device
29. Indian territory __ and Diu
32. A place to sleep
34. AI tool
35. Pass or go by
36. Indicates a purchase
39. A digital tape recording of sound
40. More (Spanish)
43. Disfigured
44. White (Spanish)
46. Church building
47. Georgia rockers
49. Type of surgery
51. Much __ about nothing
54. Make by braiding
59. Local area network
60. Unit of work or energy
61. Member of indigenous people of Thailand
62. Liquefied natural gas
64. Distance to top

Answers on page 17

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Judith Schieder, Estate Trustee

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Stanhope firefighters

Ice-water rescue training begins

by Andrew Milne

Stanhope Fire Department took another step towards the water last month.

The department sent its first two personnel to a 'train the trainer' course at the Ontario Fire College January 20-23, as the first of a series of steps towards preparing for full immersion and boat-based ice and water rescues.

The Stanhope department is the only department in the county so far to take the training for the actual immersion rescues (other departments do have staff with shore based training), and the road they've travelled to get this far has been a somewhat rocky one.

Ice and water rescues have been a political hot button in Stanhope Township in particular, and in Haliburton County in general, for some years now. Stanhope councillors have argued that the expense of providing the program is too high at a time when local governments are cutting other services, and that the dangers involved are a bit much to ask volunteers to face.

Stanhope chief Bob Pollard says, however, that he does not feel the dangers are excessive. He stresses also that the department will not ask anyone who does not want to go into the water to do so.

"Quite honestly, I think it's much safer than a house fire. You go to a house fire, you don't know what's going to happen. The ceiling might fall in, something might explode, someone might get trapped. You don't know. You can't see those things," the fire chief said.

"In ice and water rescues everything is quite visible, so I can see for myself, make that call as to whether it's a safe rescue. There aren't that many things that can happen to you. You're in a suit that's designed to keep you afloat. You're tied off. I see it as very safe. It's just a matter of having the training... Our department is 100 per cent for it. I've told our men, if anyone is reluctant, to let me know, because we don't want to be forcing it on people."

Pollard admits that one of the reasons the department is interested in do-

(more on page 3)

Despite the efforts of Dysart firefighters, a house on Soyers Lake Road was destroyed by fire Wednesday afternoon. According to Haliburton Fire Chief Miles Maughan, the building was unoccupied at the time of the blaze. Damage was estimated at $70,000. Cause of the fire has yet to be determined and no injuries were sustained in fighting the blaze.

Health board hopes to start building later this year

Ministry is eager to get going

by Andrew Milne

There was good news and bad news regarding local hospital construction last week.

The good news, as recounted by the health board executive committee, is that, with the assistance of MPP Chris Hodgson, the Ministry of Health has agreed to talk to them about how the project might be fastracked so ground can be broken at the end of next summer.

The bad news is that parts of the design-build concept they've pursued with Extendicare — a proposal whereby the health care giant would both design and construct the new facilities planned in Haliburton and Minden — probably aren't going to fly.

The committee met with the Minister of Health, the deputy minister of health, and with MPP Chris Hodgson on the project recently.

One major difficulty the ministry had was with the concept that Extendicare might recoup some of the local share of the capital funding (which they would loan to the board at the time of construction out of capital loans). The ministry will not permit, said board executive director Foster Loucks, any mixing of capital and operating dollars.

The other difficulty was with the lack of a public process — in tendering for building work.

Said a Ministry spokesperson Friday, "The project has to go through public tendering process. It has to be fair for all other interested parties... Anything like this has always gone through the public tendering process."

Said Loucks, "As I understand it, there is still some room for us to make an arrangement with Extendicare to help us with the design work. But if design/build means simply turning over to one company the whole piece, they're not going to allow that."

That being the case, says Loucks, the committee then asked what steps they would have to perform to get started by the end of next summer.

"We asked them if they could tell us, and within a few weeks... We took away the understanding that they would do that... Chris Hodgson pressed the deputy quite vigorously on that matter, and in the end she agreed that the ministry would do their part on this."

As of Friday Loucks wasn't sure what Extendicare's view of this would be, as the board still has not had discussions with the representatives of the company. He expressed however some optimism.

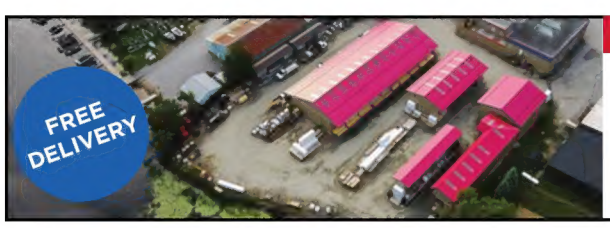
"I think their bread and butter is still in the operation side... We are going to have to talk to them though," he said.

Derby featured Thursday on VR

The Minden Sled Dog Derby will be featured this Thursday on the New VR (CKVR television, Channel 3).

The station sent a team of photographers and a reporter to the community during sled dog derby weekend and, according to a spokesman for the station, they have put together a fast-paced program that captures the excitement and drama of the sport. "Because we were able to get footage in the bush as well as downtown, view-

(more on page 23)



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